

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 217467

EXDIS MILITARY HANDLE AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

FOLLOWING TELEGRAM FROM MANILA DATED SEPTEMBER 9,
1977 SENT SECSTATE WASHDC IS REPEATED TO YOU: QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 14296

EXDIS

FOR HOLBROOKE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, RP, US

SUBJECT: DISCUSSION OF MILITARY BASES WITH FOREIGN SECRETARY

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REF: MANILA 14192

1. AT LUNCH SEPTEMBER 9 SECRETARY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS ROMULO
TOOK ME ASIDE AND SAID THAT PRESIDENT MARCOS HAD MENTIONED TO
HIM THE SATISFACTORY PRELIMINARY TALK WITH ME SEPTEMBER 8
CONCERNING THE U.S. MILITARY RULES. ROMULO STRESSED THE

POINT MADE BY MARCOS THAT HE IS COMMITTED TO RETURNING TO POLITICAL NORMALCY AND WISHES TO HAVE THE REVISED BASES AGREEMENT OUT OF THE WAY BEFORE DIFFICULTIES CAN ARISE CONCERNING IT WITH, AS ROMULO PUT IT, " THE NEW ASSEMBLY."

2. I NOTED THAT WE ALSO COULD FACE PROBLEMS WITH OUR "ASSEMBLY" CONCERNING ANY NEW AGREEMENT PROVIDING FOR INCREASED MILITARY SUPPLY. IN THIS REGARD, I CITED OUR EXPERIENCE WITH THE TURKISH AGREEMENT, WITH WHICH ROMULO WAS FAMILIAR, A NUMBER OF CURRENT ISSUES SUCH AS THE GROUND TROOP WITHDRAWAL FROM KOREA, PANAMA CANAL AND TAIWAN, AS WELL AS EXECUTIVE AND CONGRESSIONAL POSITIONS ON ARMS TRANSFERS AND HUMAN RIGHTS.

3. ROMULO ACKNOWLEDGED THESE UNCERTAINTIES ON THE U.S. POLITICAL SCENE, BUT SAID THAT NONETHELESS IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO WRAP UP AN AGREEMENT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, AT LEAST ON THE PHILIPPINE SIDE. I ASKED ABOUT THE TIMETABLE FOR NORMALCY AND ROMULO SAID THE PRESIDENT WANTS TO MOVE AS RAPIDLY AS POSSIBLE TO LIFT MARTIAL LAW TOTALLY DESPITE OPPOSITION IN THE CABINET AND COUNTRY FROM PEOPLE, AMONG WHOM ROMULO INCLUDED HIMSELF, WHO FEAR A RETURN OF THE OLD SOCIETY. I GAVE MY IMPRESSION BASED ON RECENT SPEECHES BY MARCOS AND MY OWN OBSERVATION THAT MARCOS SEEMS INCLINED TO MOVE CAUTIOUSLY AND GRADUALLY TOWARD LIFTING MARTIAL LAW, CONFIDENTIAL

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RESERVING THE RIGHT TO REINSTATE MARTIAL LAW AT ANY POINT AND, IN ANY EVENT, CONDITIONING CHANGE UPON A SETTLEMENT OF THE MUSLIM INSURRECTION IN THE SOUTH. ALL THIS SEEMED TO ME TO ENVISAGE A PROTRACTED PROCESS; WHAT DID HE THINK? ROMULO REPLIED, " PERHAPS NOT THIS YEAR, BUT NEXT."

4. WHEN I ASKED IF ROMULO REALLY ANTICIPATED THE PROSPECT OF POLITICAL OPPOSITION TO THE BASES, HE REPLIED STRONGLY IN THE AFFIRMATIVE, NOTED THAT "RADICAL ELEMENTS,"E.G., AQUINO, HAVE ALWAYS BEEN AGAINST THE BASES, AND LAUNCHED INTO A LENGTHY EXPOSITION ON THE DANGERS OF A REVERSION TO THE INDISCIPLINE AND DISORDER OF THE OLD SOCIETY.

5. COMMENT: IT IS DIFFICULT TO JUDGE THE TRUE LEVEL OF CONCERN REGARDING ANY POSSIBILITY OF EFFECTIVE POLITICAL OPPOSITION HERE TO A NEW BASES AGREEMENT. HOWEVER, THE CONCLUSION IS INESCAPABLE THAT ROMULO AS WELL AS MARCOS MAY BE EXAGGERATING THE PROSPECT WITH A VIEW TO ITS UTILITY IN NEGOTIATIONS WITH US. CERTAINLY, THIS SEEMS TO BE THE CASE AS REGARDS ROMULO'S TIMETABLE FOR A RETURN TO NORMALCY. ACCORDINGLY, I SUSPECT THAT THE GOP, LONG SUBJECT TO OUR CAVEATS CONCERNING THE CONSTRAINT OF

AMERICAN CONGRESSIONAL ATTITUDES, MAY HAVE DECIDED TO
POINT UP AND MAKE THE MOST OF WHATEVER SIMILAR ARGUMENT
CAN BE GENERATED ON THE PHILIPPINE SIDE.

6. DEPARTMENT MAY WISH TO PASS TO APPROPRIATE MILITARY
ADDRESSEES.
STULL UNQUOTE VANCE

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